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ABSTRACT

This annotated bibliography lists 14 books dealing with cultural and literary material about Vietnam and the Vietnamese, including poetry, Zen poems, geography, history, politics, customs, folk tales, legends, and other fiction. All items are available in English and intended for students at the intermediate and/or secondary level. Each entry indicates the appropriate level(s) and gives full bibliographic and availability information. (TL)

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Indochinese Refugee Education Guides

#1

INTERMEDIATE/SECONDARY EDUCATION SERIES: Vietnamese History, Literature, and Folklore

Following is the first of several bibliographies which deal with cultural and literary material about Vietnam and the Vietnamese, available in English. The entries are all for the intermediate and/or secondary level and are designated as to appropriateness, e.g. upper elementary and intermediate, secondary and adult, etc.

1. From the Vietnamese: Ten Centuries of Poetry, edited by Burton Raffel. New York: October House, 1968. 75 pp. (Secondary and Adult)

   A seven-page introduction discusses and illustrates the rules of Vietnamese versification. The rest of the book is a collection of Vietnamese poems from the 11th century to the present. Two peasant songs are included. The translations are by Burton Raffel based on literal renderings of the originals supplied by Vietnamese scholars. (The poems represent a wide range both in time and subject matter.)

2. Getting to Know the Two Vietnams, by Fred West, illustrated by Polly Bolian. New York: Coward-McCann, 1963. 64 pp.

   The first half of the book, for upper elementary and junior high students, gives a comprehensive historical background of Vietnam, the achievements of President Diem's administration and the causes that led to its downfall. There is a chapter on the City of Saigon, the people, the transportation, schools, clothing and food.

   The second half deals with foreign aid in Vietnam, primarily Chinese in the North and American in the South. The life in North Vietnam is presented through the eyes of a boy brought up on a state-run farm. The author also talks about the role of different religions in Vietnam and some cultural features.

   "To tell twin stories" is the stated goal of the book, yet there are only five pages devoted to the life in North Vietnam.

   The writing is clear, instructive and supplemented with beautiful illustrations, maps and a chronology of important dates in Vietnamese history.

3. KIM - A Gift from Vietnam, by Frank W. Chinnock. New York: World Publishing Co., 1971. 210 pp. (Secondary and Adult)

An editor for Reader's Digest, Mr. Chinnock tells the story of his own adopted Vietnamese child. The first five chapters describe how the family came to the decision of adopting a Vietnamese girl, his trip to Saigon to search for "their daughter", their long wait, their anxiety, expectation, frustration and finally the arrival of Kim. The remaining eight chapters describe the difficult time they had adjusting to Kim and helping Kim adjust to her new family. Recommended especially for adoptive parents with Vietnamese children. The Chinnocks' personal experience will help them understand and handle their adopted children better. There are 30 pictures of Kim in different moods and acts.

4. Land of Seagull and Fox; Folk Tales of Vietnam, by Ruth Q. Sun, illustrated by Ho Thanh Duc. Rutland, Vermont: C.E. Tuttle Co., 1967. 135 pp. $5.50. (Secondary and Adult)

Thirty-one traditional folk stories translated in a pleasant style. The author spent one year as a lecturer at the University of Saigon, and collected many of the stories directly from her students in "versions learned at the knees of their parents and grandparents". The book is well presented, beautifully illustrated and representative; the tales reflect the universal nature of folk tales, showing man's earliest attempt to interpret his own surroundings, the basic human plight, man's inner desire to get away from harsh reality, etc. There is a short chronology of events -- both real and legendary -- in Vietnamese history. The book can serve as an entertaining source of information on Vietnam and its people.

5. Let's Visit Vietnam, by John C. Caldwell. New York: The John Day Co., 1969. $3.96.

Appropriate for upper elementary and junior high students. The first part of the book gives an outline of the history of Vietnam from the ancient past to the emergence of Ho Chi Minh and the partition of Vietnam in 1954. It also describes the way of life in different areas of the country: the rural, the highlands and the city. The second half is about the American involvement in Vietnam. The book ends with the beginning of the combat troops' withdrawal.

In his account of events, the author tends to relate what is familiar to the Americans, such as the comparison of the nocturnal attacks of the Viet Cong on the strategic hamlets with the Indian attacks during the night in the pioneer days, which help give a clearer picture to the young American reader.

Despite a few errors regarding the historical facts of Vietnam and the language, the book is easy to read, clear, and instructive. It is intended for the American student who wants to know the whys and hows of the American involvement in Vietnam.

6. Promises to Keep, by Paige Dixon. New York: Atheneum, 197[illegible]. 165 pp. $6.95. (Secondary and Adult)

The book deals with problems faced by an orphaned boy, half American, half Vietnamese, when he went to live with his American grandmother in a small New England town after his Vietnamese mother died. His quiet but strong personality had a good influence on his American cousin. The book also presents the American youngsters as prejudiced, cruel, thoughtless; but there are other nice boys, too.

7. The Story of Vietnam: A Background Book for Young People, by Hal Dareff. New York: Parents' Magazine Press, 1966. 250 pp. (Intermediate through Adult)

This is a clearly presented (primarily modern) history of Vietnam. The book begins with a chapter on the history of Vietnam before the French. The establishment of the French is given in more detail, and there is a chapter on Communism and Ho Chi Minh. The last half of the book is devoted to the period since World War II, with the book ending with President Ky still in power.

The author's purpose is to provide a background for understanding American involvement in Vietnam. As a result, this is almost exclusively a political history, and is primarily concerned with the more recent periods. In places the writing seems somewhat "slanted", but the author makes it clear in his introduction that the book contains personal opinions and interpretations of facts.

8. Vietnam and Countries of the Mekong, by Larry Henderson. Rev. ed. New York: Thomas Nelson, 1967. 254 pp. (Secondary and Adult)

The first five chapters are devoted to Vietnam, ranging from the geographical and cultural background to the political and economic problems. Good background reading for high school students.

9. Viet Nam: Land of Many Dragons, by Hal Buell. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1968. 142 pp.

This is a simplified history of Vietnam for the upper elementary/junior high level, with about half the book devoted to the period of American involvement. The last two chapters deal with the impact of the Vietnamese War on the U.S. and its possible importance in the world situation. The book is illustrated with many striking black and white photographs. Because of its publication date (1968), the concluding chapters are dated.

10. Vietnam, Our Beloved Land, by Nguyen Cao Dan and Tran Cao Linh. Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, 1968. 124 pp. (Intermediate through Adult)

This is a collection of photographs by Vietnamese photographers designed to show Vietnam as it is remembered by the Vietnamese. The 86 photographs are grouped into the following categories, each of which begins with a brief introduction: plains and meadows, the evergreen highlands, the sea, sand dunes, cultural aspects and folklore, Vietnamese boats, the Vietnamese woman, the Vietnamese soldier. While these photographs have been chosen in part for their artistic value, most of them also present visually important aspects of Vietnamese culture as well as views of the land and people.

11. Vietnam: The Country, The People, by David C. Cooke. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1968. $4.95. (Secondary and Adult)

The book has 11 chapters covering the legendary origin of the Vietnamese, their historical background and the characteristics of their way of life as compared with those in the Western world. Chapter headings are: 1) Legend of the Kindly Dragon, 2) A Study in Survival, 3) The Family is Always First, 4) Paris of the Orient, 5) Life in a Vietnamese Village, 6) Customs and Religions, 7) The Happy Times, 8) A Different Way of Life, 9) Marriage by Arrangement, 10) Nuoc mam and Hot Dog, 11) Your Future in the Stars. Most of the information collected is based on the author's personal contacts during the days he served in Vietnam as publications advisor to the SVN government.

The author dwells heavily on traditions no longer practiced in Vietnam which tend to give the reader a misleading impression of the daily life of the modern Vietnamese. He also tends to overgeneralize, and misinterpretations crop up throughout the book. It is yet a delightful book to read if one is looking for entertaining reading material.

12. Vietnamese Folk Poetry, translated by John Balaban. Greensboro, N.C.: Unicorn Press, 1974. 47 pp. $8.00 cloth, $4.00 paperback. (Secondary and Adult)

This is a book of traditional Vietnamese oral poems (ca dao) collected by the translator in the Mekong delta, Saigon, the Central Highlands, and Hue in 1971 and 1972. The poems in this book were chosen from around 500 recorded at that time from about 30 people ranging from a 5-year-old boy to a 72-year-old woman. In addition to the 36 short poems (the longest is a page), there is a one-page introduction and a biographical note about the translator.

13. Vietnamese Legends, compiled and translated by G.F. Schultz. Rutland, Vermont: C.E. Tuttle, 1965. 163 pp. $4.70. (Secondary and Adult)

The book contains 32 short stories as part of the well of folklore of Vietnam. Versions presented here are most popular ones and given in a pleasant style. The author gives a brief note on the historical background of the country, pointing out the deep influence on the culture by the neighbor in the north, yet observes that "on the Chinese base, there has developed a language, literature and civilization of distinct Vietnamese flavor", a point many foreign writers on Vietnam have missed.

14. Zen Poems, by Nhat Hanh. Greensboro, N.C.: Unicorn Press, in press. $10.00 cloth, $5.00 paperback.

This book contains 12 poems. These are written in Vo-Dinh's ink-and-brush calligraphy (in Vietnamese) on a sheet which also interprets each verse with a drawing. The English translation (by Teo Savory and Vo-Dinh) is en face. The poems suggest the feel of the philosophy of Zen Buddhism.